



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH & WELFARE

JAMES E. RISCH – Governor
RICHARD M. ARMSTRONG – Director

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
450 West State Street, 10th Floor
P.O. Box 83720
Boise, ID 83720-0036
PHONE 208-334-5625
FAX 208-334-5926

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 21, 2006

Tom Shanahan
(208) 334-0668

Sweeps Project Nets \$96,000 in Welfare Fraud Repayments in Southwest Idaho

The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare's Fraud Unit conducted a week-long intensive investigation of welfare program fraud in southwest Idaho last week, identifying \$96,000 to be repaid due to violations.

The Fraud Unit pooled eight fraud investigators from around the state to examine 68 reported fraud cases. Of those, 36 people involved in cases have admitted guilt and agreed to repay the state, while three others will be prosecuted. Ten of the cases did not involve fraud, while the remaining cases remain open and under investigation.

"We conducted a "Sweeps Project" because we had a backlog of cases in southwest Idaho which we wanted to concentrate on," says Lynette Porter, Fraud Unit Supervisor. "This was the first time we did anything like this and it was very successful. Along with the \$96,000 that must be repaid, the unit stopped the continued payments in fraudulent cases, which could have amounted to an additional \$88,000 over the next year."

Porter says the majority of people who receive welfare assistance from the state are honest and genuinely need assistance. She points to the fact that last year in the Food Stamp and Child Care programs, over 104,000 people received assistance with over \$133 million distributed in benefits. But there are people who take advantage of programs that seek to help low-income or vulnerable people. "We strive to protect the integrity of the programs by making sure only eligible people receive program benefits," she says. "I don't think anyone has a problem helping people who really need it. Many of our programs have limited resources, so we want to make sure the people needing assistance are the ones receiving it."

(more)

The majority of cases involved Food Stamps and Child Care Assistance. Cases ranged from a little over \$400 in fraudulent payments, to one case that exceeded \$11,000. Along with having to repay the state, people who commit fraud also are disqualified from participating in most public assistance programs for a minimum of a year.

Porter says plans are now under way to expand the 'Sweeps Project' to other areas of the state. She also encourages people who suspect welfare program fraud to contact the Fraud Unit through the toll-free fraud hotline, 1-866-635-7515. "We all can do our part to ensure the money we spend on programs designed to help low-income people is spent wisely," she says.

###

(Editors: For more information please contact IDHW Public Information Officer Tom Shanahan, 334-0668.)